

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA:ALATHERTONJR:MAR

APPROVED BY NEA:ALATHERTONJR.

S/S:O M. TANNER

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TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

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FOR AMBASSADOR FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, US, MASS

SUBJECT: C-130'S FOR EGYPT

AS YOU KNOW, A NUMBER OF SENATORS HAVE URGED THAT THE C-130 SALE BE ON A COMMERCIAL RATHER THAN AN FMS BASIS, WHICH WOULD MEAN THAT UNDER PRESENT LEGISLATION THE SALE WOULD NOT NEED TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE CONGRESS. THIS WOULD AVOID A PUBLIC DEBATE AND ENABLE ADMINISTRATION SPOKESMAN TO AVOID SAYING THINGS WHICH MIGHT SOUND RESTRICTIVE SO FAR AS WHAT WE COULD DO LATER IS CONCERNED. THE SECRETARY WOULD LIKE TO HAVE SADAT'S AND FAHMY'S VIEWS ON THE COMMERCIAL VERSUS THE FMS ROUTE, UNLESS YOU THINK RAISING THE QUESTION WITH THEM WOULD ITSELF CAUSE PROBLEMS, IN WHICH CASE YOU SHOULD NOT DO SO. IF YOU SEE NO PROBLEM IN PUTTING THE QUESTION TO THE EGYPTIANS, YOU SHOULD SEEK FAHMY'S AND PRESIDENT SADAT'S VIEWS AS URGENTLY AS POSSIBLE, MAKING THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

-- OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT WE CAN GET THE C-130 SALE THROUGH CONGRESS GOING THE FMS ROUTE -- I.E., AS A GOVERNMENT-TO-SECRET

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GOVERNMENT SALE. IN THE PROCESS, HOWEVER, SOMEONE IN

CONGRESS WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY INTRODUCE A RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL. THIS WILL REQUIRE THAT HEARINGS BE HELD

DURING WHICH, WHILE WE WOULD EXPECT TO WIN IN THE END, WE WILL HAVE A PUBLIC FIGHT WITH MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS WHO WOULD SUPPORT THE RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL, AND DURING WHICH THERE WOULD BE GREAT PRESSURE ON US TO SAY WHAT MORE WE PLAN TO DO IN THE WAY OF MILITARY SALES, COMBINED WITH EFFORTS TO GET US TO TIE OUR HANDS FOR THE FUTURE.

-- UNDER PRESENT LAW, FMS SALES OVER DOLS 25 MILLION MUST REST TWENTY DAYS WITH CONGRESS. IF THIS WERE HANDLED AS A COMMERCIAL SALE, WE COULD MOVE FORWARD WITHOUT DELAY AND WITHOUT CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE. MANY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS SUCH AS SENATOR HUMPHREY, WHO BASICALLY UNDERSTAND IMPORTANCE OF C-130 SALE AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE IT GO THROUGH, ARE URGING THAT WE GO THE COMMERCIAL SALE ROUTE.

-- A COMMERCIAL SALE WOULD REQUIRE AN EXPORT LICENSE AND THEREFORE THE OFFICIAL APPROVAL OF THE ADMINISTRATION, SO THAT THE SALE WOULD STILL REPRESENT A US GOVERNMENT DECISION TO SELL THESE AIRCRAFT TO EGYPT.

-- WE ARE PREPARED TO GO EITHER THE FMS OR THE COMMERCIAL ROUTE AND WILL BE GUIDED BY PRESIDENT SADAT'S PREFERENCE IN THIS RESPECT. KISSINGER

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